

Abstract

The invention provides methods and apparatus for processing information, e.g., audio, video or image information, for transmission in a communication system. In an illustrative embodiment, a joint multiple program coder determines the value of a single-bit or multiple-bit criticality measure, e.g., criticality flag, in a designated interval, e.g., the duration of an audio frame, for each of the programs in a set of multiple programs to be transmitted in the system. The joint multiple program coder allocates a pool of available bits to the programs based at least in part on the determined values of the criticality measures, such that a program with a higher-valued criticality measure in the designated time interval is allocated a greater percentage of the available bits for that interval than another one of the programs with a lower-valued criticality measure. The joint multiple program coder repeats the determination and allocation operations for each of a number of time intervals, e.g., frames, such that the bit allocation can vary from interval to interval.

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